

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



## COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM

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### FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR HOLIDAY FEASTS

With the holiday season fast approaching, San Bernardino County Department of Public Health reminds consumers about the importance of safe food handling to prevent foodborne illness. Bacterial pathogens like Salmonella and E-coli can be present in food, such as meat and poultry, and can cause illness due to insufficient cooking, inadequate cooling and improper food handling practices.

The following easy-to-remember food safety tips should be followed every day of the year and will help consumers ensure holiday feasts do not become a source of foodborne disease:

#### **Keep hands and food contact surfaces clean and wash them often:**

- Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling raw food, after using the toilet, after changing diapers and after handling pets. Dry hands with a clean, single-use paper towel. People with cuts or skin infections on their hands should not prepare food.

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- Thoroughly clean all work surfaces, utensils and dishes with hot, soapy water and rinse with hot water before and after each use. Knives, cutting boards and meat grinders should be washed thoroughly (in the dishwasher, for example) before using them for other food.

**Keep food separate; don't cross contaminate:**

- Always wash fruit and vegetables in clean sinks, and keep them away from raw meats, poultry, eggs, fish and any other raw animal product.
- When tasting food, ladle a small amount of it into a small dish and taste with a clean spoon. Remove the dish and spoon from the area and clean when finished.

**Refrigerate food promptly:**

- Refrigerate or freeze turkey and other meats promptly after purchase. Prevent meat juices from spilling on and contaminating other food or surfaces both at the market and at home. Refrigeration should be kept at 41° F or colder.
- Thaw a frozen turkey inside the refrigerator in its original wrapping. Thawing a moderate-sized turkey in this manner may take 2-3 days. If time does not permit a gradual thaw, place the frozen turkey in a watertight wrapper under cold—not hot or warm—*running* water until the meat is pliable.

**Cook food to proper temperatures:**

- Rinse the turkey in cold water and drain well before cooking.
- Stuffing should be cooked separately. Turkey should be placed immediately in a preheated oven set no lower than 325° F. Turkey and other poultry should be cooked to an internal temperature of 180° F to kill pathogens that may be present, and the stuffing must reach 165° F. Always use a meat thermometer to ensure that meat is thoroughly cooked. To accurately measure the temperature, insert a thermometer in the thickest part of the turkey thigh, but not against the bone. Turkey meat is thoroughly cooked when the hip joint moves easily and the juices run clear, not pink. Steaks and roasts should be cooked to at least 145° F and ground meat should be cooked to at least 160° F.

- When leftovers are eaten hot, they should be heated to at least 165° F or until hot and steaming throughout.
- Food cooked or reheated in microwaves should be stirred or turned occasionally to ensure that all parts of the food are thoroughly cooked. If using frozen meat, first microwave the meat until completely thawed, then follow by cooking. If microwaving is not possible, then allow at least 1 ½ times the usual cooking time to ensure the meat is sufficiently cooked throughout.

**Refrigerate leftovers:**

- Turkey should be refrigerated one of two ways: within 2 hours after it is cooked or right after cooking. The turkey should be de-boned, sliced or pulled into pieces no more than 2 ½ inches thick and refrigerated in shallow containers. Store the meat, stuffing and stock in separate containers in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Do not eat leftover meat that has been refrigerated for longer than 4 days or eat leftover stuffing or gravy that has been refrigerated for longer than 2 days. If properly wrapped, leftover meat may be safely consumed after being frozen for 1-2 months.
- Keep all cream, custard and meringue pies, and any other food with custard filling, refrigerated, except when being served.

Resources for information on food safety include the San Bernardino County website at

[www.sbcounty.gov/dehs](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dehs) or the national Partnership for Food Safety Education “Fight BAC” at

[www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org). For more information, contact the federal Food and Drug Administration Food Information and Seafood Hotline at (800) 332-4010 and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Hotline at (800) 535-4555.

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